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For the Historical Society -

The Van Voorhees Letters

1684 - 1699





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## FOREWORD

This booklet contains in translation four letters written from the Netherlands to a son of Steven Coerte, founder of the Van Voorhees family. Of these four letters only one, that written under date of February 9, 1687, from Hilbert Coerts to Coert Stevens, is included in the Genealogy of the Van Voorhees Family in America, compiled by Elias Van Voorhis, published in 1888. There is a synopsis of the translation of a letter from Hilbert Coerts of Voor Hyes, dated April 13, 1684. In addition Elias Van Voorhis published the translation of a letter from the Reverend Casparus Van Zuren, of Holland, written to Coert Stevense Van Voorhees. This letter is undated, but internal evidence indicates that it was probably written late in 1699. The translation of the letter from Hilbert Coerts published in the Genealogy of 1888 is found to be seriously defective.

The original letters are in the State Library at Albany, New York. Photostats of these were obtained and sent to Dr. H. P. Schaap in Holland to be studied. In 1961 the four letters were printed in the Nieuwe Drentse Volksalmanak (New Drenthe Peoples' Almanac) with an introduction by Dr. Schaap, of which a translation is also included here. This introduction contains considerable information about the use and disposition of church lands between the tenth and the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, with emphasis on the property under the jurisdiction of the cloister at Dikninge which was originally at Ruinen. Some of this background material has been omitted here as not germane to the story of the letters. Where the portion of Dr. Schaap's introduction is omitted, that fact is indicated.

It will be noted that, in the following translations, the writers of the letters are found addressing their American correspondent, Coert Stevens, as "cousin"—not "nephew," as in the translation in the Genealogy of 1888. The original word in Dutch is "neve" (the modern form is "neef"), which can be translated either as cousin or nephew. As to which of these meanings applies in the present case, note Albert Coerts' letter of October 26, 1686, addressed to his well beloved "neve," Coert Stevens. He begins by acknowledging the receipt of Coert's letter written in November, 1684, from which he had learned of the death of "my great-uncle Steven." Uncle Steven is obviously Coert's father, Steven Coerte, the immigrant to this country, who had died on February 16, 1684. If Albert Coerts was a great-nephew of Steven Coerte, then he was obviously "cousin" to the latter's son.

The erroneous assumption that Hilbert Coerts and Albert Coerts were brothers (actually they were great-nephews) of Steven Coerte, the American forbear, was rendered easy by the fact that all three bore the same patronymic, "Coerts," which means "son of Coert." As it happens, though, these gentlemen were not sons of the same Coert. The father of Hilbert and Albert was a Coert Albertse, whose name does indeed appear in some of the early land records of the Ruinen area. Note that in the following letters Hil-



bert and Albert give information concerning various aunts and uncles bearing the patronymic, "Albertse," although nothing concerning their own father, who was obviously not living. The latter's name, based on his son's patronymic (Coerts) and the patronymic (Albertse) borne by his brothers and sisters, must be assumed to be Coert Albertse. The patronymic, Albertse, indicates that his own father was Albert, probably the Albert Coerts listed as a renter of lands in the vicinity during the early 1600's, and presumably also the brother of Steven Coerte who came to this country in 1660.

It will be seen that this revision of relationships long accepted in the family changes completely our picture of Steven Coerts' ancestry in the homeland. No longer do we have records of three generations preceding him in the Netherlands (as published in the Genealogy of 1888); instead we are reduced to the mere knowledge inherent in his patronymic, that his father's name was Coert. Beyond that we know nothing definite of his forebears.

Although we have lost a generation or so of ancestors in the Netherlands, the letters still tell their own story of life in the homeland, and indicate that a fairly close connection was maintained for many years after Steven Coerte had brought his family to the new country. That in itself is something of a satisfaction as well as a matter of interest.

The quaint and, to us, unusual phraseology of the times during which the letters was written has been retained in the translation so far as this can be done and still convey the meaning of the writers. Likewise the various spellings of both individual and place names have been retained to indicate the lack of conformity common to the times.

The translation of Dr. Schaap's introduction, written in modern Dutch, was made by Rev. John D. Muyskens, who was from 1915 to 1959 a member of the Arcot Mission of the Reformed Church of America in South India, of which Voorhees College in Vellore is a part. Mr. Muyskens was for many years a member of the governing board of Voorhees College. The translation of the letters, which are in old Dutch, presented a problem. We were fortunate in securing the services of Mr. D. Thomas Stiel, a pre-ministerial student at Rutgers University. Mr. Stiel is a native of Holland who has lived in this country since World War II; first in Canada, more recently in New Brunswick, New Jersey. To both of these gentlemen we are indebted for their invaluable assistance without which the letters could not have been published.

We are grateful to Dr. Stephen Francis Voorhees who not only conferred with Dr. Schaap while travelling in Holland but who has been most generous in bearing the expense of both the translation and the printing of the letters.

Donald A. Sinclair  
Helen M. Voorhees

New Brunswick, N. J.  
November, 1962.











# THE FOUR LETTERS OF HILBERT AND ALBERT COERTS

Sent from Drenthe in the Years 1684, 1686, 1687, and 1699

By Dr. H. P. Schaap\*

Through fortunate circumstances and with the kind assistance of Rutgers University at New Brunswick, New Jersey, U.S.A., we have been given the opportunity to pass on to the readers of the "Nieuwe Drentse Volksalmanak" four letters written by two brothers, both real Drent people, to their relatives, also Drent people. All four letters were sent to their cousin, Coert Stevens van Voorhees, son of their great-uncle, Steven Coerte, who crossed the ocean with his family and who has left behind in the United States of North America many descendants in fortunate and honorable circumstances.

The letters of 1684, 1687, and 1699 were written by Hilbert Coerts of Hees near Ruinen, and in two of these, following the example of his cousin in America, he calls himself Van Voorhees; and in the letter of 1699 he calls himself Hilbert Coerts "in het riegiën," which seems to indicate that he was well known in the Ruinen area. The letter of 1683 was written by Albert Coerts, who also called himself Van Voorhees. He lived at Hoogeveen and was married to Aeltien Coops Addemeraels, daughter of the former mayor of Echten, Coop Luitiens (or "Copluytys").

Concerning this Van Voorhees family there appeared in the "Nieuwe Drentsche Volksalmanak" for 1943 a scholarly essay, by J. Poortman under the title "Steven Coerts, a Drent Emigrant of 1660." And the same writer wrote a novel entitled "Steven Coerts, a History of a Ruiner Family of the 17th Century." (Mep-pel, undated; out-of-print.) This last work we are not taking into consideration, because it is a novel. In his article in the "Nieuwe Drentse Volksalmanak" for 1943, J. Poortman writes, "Three letters have been saved, written by the Drenthe family in 1684, 1687, and 1699," but it seems evident that one other Drenthe letter has been saved, namely the one of 1886, that came from Hoogeveen.

[At this point there follow several pages relating to the history of the church lands of the area. These are omitted as not being germane to the story.]

Now we pass over a few centuries, because it is time that we finally hear something concerning the writers of the letters mentioned briefly at the beginning of our article. But before we do that, first the reader needs to gain some insight as to what happened in connection with Dikninge and its tenant farmers and their possessions at the time of the introduction (from above!) of the Reformation and the accompanying secularization of the church properties in Drenthe.

\*Translated from the original article in Dutch published in the *Nieuwe Drentse Volksalmanak*, 1961.





In the sixteenth century the "double cloister" Dikninge, through the steady decline in the number of monks, gradually became a nunnery, an institution for prominent ladies. The lady entrant received the title of "vrouwe" or abbess, and the abbot was reduced to a sort of figurehead.

After the Count of Lalaing, Rennenberg, passed over to the side of Spain (or perhaps one could better say, to the side of the malcontents) Drenthe also experienced in 1580 its "storm against idols"—not at the hands of the local population but of the State troops (even the abbey of Dikninge had to believe this). "Because of the continuing war troubles" the cloister population went to the safety of Hasselt, the city of "The Holy Place." Scarcely any of the personnel had remained in Dikninge on guard. This "Hasselt Banishment" lasted from 1580 to 1590.

"Away from his abbey in exile, Herman van der Burcht died, the last tragic figure in the long row of prelates who had followed one another for four and a half centuries."

The journey of Prince Maurits and Willem Lodewyk to Groningen brought new miseries and disasters over the old countryside. Twice on the journey to and from, the army passed right by the abbey. On its return journey it was preceded by whole herds of cattle which harassed Drenthe farmers were attempting to take in safety to the grasslands in the north of Overijssel. In the succeeding war years again many of the residents of Drenthe fled; but the Dikningers remained, hoping for a blessing. But scarcely was Drenthe in 1597 freed for good from the Spanish rule when Willem Lodewyk took firmly in hand the restoration of that area.

On the 11th of November he asked the noted Menso Alting, who was born in Eelde and lived in Emden in East Friesland, and who as early as 1566 had at Sleen preached the new doctrine (though without any success) to consider with his secretary, Everhard van Reidt, by what means the introduction of the Reformation could best be accomplished.

The "secularization" — or the "making wordly" — of the church properties, which after 1603 was taken up vigorously in Drenthe, won out in Assen earlier than in Dikninge. There also in Assen the Cistersian Women's Convent had long since become a sort of "Young Ladies Institution," but in Dikninge it did not go so readily. The "Women" and the "Young Ladies" remained separate as long as possible since they enjoyed the support of many a member of the knighthood both in Drenthe and in Overijssel, who had members of their families or relatives in the convent. But finally these last "convent maidens" were also placed "on alimantation." They, along with many a pastor in Drenthe who did not wish to become unfaithful to his old belief, or who failed his examination for the ministry, went on half-pay or received a retirement pension; and Dikninge gave more pension than Assen, for it was richer.

Let us not forget this: that when we speak of the "abolition of the abbey" we only mean its abolition as a religious body. As an institution in the legal sense, as a financial complex, as a body





corporate with a fixed purpose, Dikninge survived up into the French period. According to "The Instruction of the States General" of December 8, 1601, to the newly erected "college of Drost and Deputies of Drenthe," it was prescribed, "That both of the maidens' organizations shall remain and be kept in being and the support of the conventuals must be paid out of the aforesaid church properties." Dikninge continued to be an independent community of estates, over which the governing body of the institution acted not as owner, but as "trustee," and administrator. In 1618 the old guardian of the abbey, not a very careful administrator, was retired and succeeded by a new administrator, Gerhard Struuck, appointed by Drost and Deputies. From then on, the lessees and the payers of rent had to deal with him. He was a stiff and energetic manager. But for the farmers there was in fact little change. This was also true in another matter. Most of them, although with very little enthusiasm, are said to have changed from Catholic to Protestant.

In some localities there came in place of good-natured and not very demanding pastors, strict, demanding, and almost sour preachers. As I wrote in my article concerning Menso Alting's stay at Sleen, "The holy water sprinkler and the little chapels by the stations of the Cross, **that** they understood; but predestination and such doctrines left them cold." But instruction and knowledge of the Bible (and hence also knowledge of the Netherlands language) were very much improved. And equally "in Ruinen" the exchange was certainly not a bad one. The last pastor of Ruinen, Steven Sasse, lived with his concubine and for a long time had the bad taste to reside in Dikninge with this companion. P. Mathias wrote about him, "As the last monk of Dikninge he did his abbey little honor." (Fortunately Coert Stevens was not a son of his. For your consolation I write this.)

The oldest known ancestor of Steven Coerts, as also of the letter-writers, Hilbert Coerts and Albert Coerts, we first read about in the year 1542 (still a Catholic time) in the "Ordelen" of the Etstoel of Drenthe, when he was involved in a certain property law case with a certain Henrick Leukensz. There he is named Coerdt to Heess. In the court record (Volume II, Folio 10) we read, "Between Coerdt to Heess on one side and young man Henrick Leukenns on the other." And in Folio 15 it is ordered, "That both parties in connection with a sold field, of which one part is better than the other, for this reason shall make division. And of the transaction both parties, between now and the next court session shall agree in friendship whether there shall be at the next court a judgment thereof if it be fair."

Fifty-three years later, viz. 1595, we come across in the account book for the years 1599-1599 one Koert tho Middelhees. That can hardly be the same person as Coert to Heess in 1542; but he surely belongs to the same lineage.

1595—Received from Koert tho Middelhees 5 gold guilders  
of the old debt and still owes 2 gold guilders 7-0-0  
Sept. 1595—Received from Koert tho Middelhees 4 daler





and 3 stuivers, by rent master's measure for hay rent. 5-17-0  
There appears a balance of 111 stuivers from 1595.

From the accounts of the rent master of Dikninge for 1621, we then finally get a clearer view of the members of the family who were the lessees of the three farms, Voorhees, Middelhees, and Achterhees, of the Dikninge corporation.

At Voorhees lives	Albert te Voorhees
At Middelhees lives	Jan Coerts
At Achterhees lives	Coert te Achterhees

Jan Coerts of Middelhees seems to be the son of Coert tho Middelhees in 1595. And we run across the old Koert in the accounts of the rent master of Dikninge in the year 1625. In Folio 16 we read, "Coert te Middelheys holds in mortgage two pieces of farm land, situated at Suid-Esch, for 100 gold guilders." That land was redeemed in 1625 by the rent master of Dikninge. In 1632 the rental of Middelheys also included the two fields which the said Coert te Middelheys had held in mortgage. Also from those records of the rent master of 1621 we can learn of what size the three farms were:

Voorhees contains 21 "mudden" (1) of farmland and 7½ "dachmaet" (2) of grainland, which again for a period of six years beginning May, 1621, is leased to Albert van Voerheess, for 28 "mudden" yearly, which according to the overseer has been received for the first year. Rental—28 "mudden."

Middelhees contains 19½ "mudden" of farm land and 11 "dachmaet" of grainland. This is herewith and for a period of six years, beginning May, 1621, leased again to Jan Coerts, for a yearly lease of 35 "mudden" of rye which according to the overseer has been received for the first year. Rental—35 "mudden."

Achterheys containing 18 "mudden" of farm land, 10 "dachmaet" of hayland is likewise leased by the Drost and Deputies for a period of six years, beginning May, 1621, to Coert t' Achterheys, for a sum of 24 "mudden" of rye of which also payment for the first year has been received here by the overseer.

Rental—23 "mudden."

In 1626 the rentals were suddenly increased, and we note a change: Voorhees and Middelhees were then rented by Jonker Van Boetzelaer and Achterhees by Jacob Osting te Spier. But presumably the old renters as sub-tenants remained on the farms. In 1630 Van Boetzelaer again leased "Voorhees" and "Middlehees" to Albert te Voorhees and Jan Coerts. And "Coert te Achterhees" comes back to Achterhees in 1632.

In 1642 there appears on "Achterhees": Hilbert Coerts t' Achterhees, presumably a son of the aforesaid Coert t' Achterhees and the writer in later years of three of the four letters sent to America. (3) But of his great-uncle Steven Coerts (the emigrant of 1660)



we have herein had no notice. But due to a fortunate happening we see him appear finally in the manuscript Ground Inventory of 1642 for Mijtheer van Ruynen and indeed among the chief crofters in the manor of Ruinen:

1642—Steven Coerts—3 “mudden” and 2 skepels (4)	539-0-0
House and garden	300-0-0
	<hr/>
<b>1910087</b>	839-0-0

And we meet him once again in the accounts of Johan Struuck, rent master of the Dickeninge Cloister for the year 1658: “Pols-Erv at Ruyne, 17½ “mudden” of farmland, 7½ “dachwerck.” (5) This was rented to Steven Coerts on March 22, 1658, for the previous rental such as the renter thereof had paid yearly at the rate of 28 “mudden” of rye continuing for this year; the amount comes to 28 “mudden.”

In the accounts of 1661 Steven Coerts is again missing. On the 14th of March of that year the “Pols Erve” was leased to Hendrick Frens, the same person evidently as the Hendrick Friens from the rearmost convent, named in the letter of Hilbert Coerts, “in het Riegien” (6) who in 1699 had bought movable properties from the heirs of Steven Coerts. There must evidently have been family connection with the Frens family, because on April 5, 1663, there were married at Ruinen: Jan Vrens and Albertjen Alberts.

From the above facts it would seem that Steven Coerts never settled on the Voorhees farm as an independent farmer; he was originally a crofter (1642), not a landowner, which in Drenthe formed a separate class. But in the course of the years he reached a higher status, as witness his leasing of the middle-sized “Pols-Erve” which was rated at 28 “mudden.”

In closing, let me tell a little more of the family relationships as we have been able to reconstruct them from the four letters that follow:

Hilbert Coerts (of 't Riegien) names seven uncles and aunts, viz. Uncle Hendrick Alberts at Twyel (Tweeloo), near Meppel, formerly under Ruinerwold; Aunt Merchien at Hught, widow of Jan Meeuwis; Aunt Geertien at Oshaer by Echten, married; Uncle Luytgen Alberts, at Haakswold under Ruinerwold, and a child; Uncle Jan Alberts, at Hesselingen, southwest of Meppel (Dikninge overseer): Uncle Hilbert Alberts (left two sons and a daughter); Uncle Wessel Alberts of Amsterdam, Bickers-Island, who left wife and daughter.

The letter writer, Hilbert Coerts, who must have been born about 1615, lived originally at Achterhees, but later had his own house built in “the Riegien,” so he is called (more or less officially) “Hilbert Coerts int Riegien.” And we found him recorded three times as such in the baptismal book of Ruinen, as when on July 1, 1683, on July 20, 1684, and on February 15, 1691, he had children baptized whose forenames were not given except in the last case: February 15, 1691, the child of “Hilbert int Regen” baptized and





named Court Van Voorhees. At the beginning of our article we have already said "... from the example of his cousin in America." The above-mentioned children were definitely children of his second marriage, since he was twice married.

He also had three brothers, as appears in the letters: Jan Coerts at Voorhees, married to a daughter of Jan Vrericks of Nuyl; Wessel Coerts, living at Veeningen near Zuidwolde, married, with five children; and the youngest brother, Albert Coerts, carpenter, wood dealer, living at Echtens-Hoogeveen, married to Aeltyn Coops Addemeraels, by whom he had two daughters, Swaentyn and Jacoby. This is the writer of the 1686 letter.

There was also a second cousin, Marchien Stevens, at Dwingelo, the oldest sister of Coert Stevens in America, to whom the letters were sent. So now we let the letters follow.

### Notes

1. A unit of land measurement apparently peculiar to the Drenthe area. A "mudde" of land is that amount which can be sowed with one "mud" (hectolitre) of grain.
2. A measure of land, i.e., a piece of land of a size which can be harvested in one day.
3. Dr. Schaap is in error here as the Hilbert Coert of 1642 could not have been the man of that name who wrote the letters of 1684-1699 as the latter was not born until about three years later (1645).
4. A measure of land area, i.e., the amount of land which can be sowed with one skepel of grain.
5. A measure of land in terms of the amount of work that can be done in a day.
6. Apparently this is a corruption of what would be spelled in modern Dutch as "Rijtje," i.e., the (Little) Row; in other words a row of houses known locally by that designation.



## THE LETTERS

Dear and well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens tho Voor Hees,

I Hilbert Coerts tot Voor Hyes with my wife and children wish you a thousand times a good night and we inform you that we, glory to God, are still strong and healthy and we trust to learn this from you as well. Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens, I inform you that I received that letter which you wrote on October 16, 1683, and learned from this letter that you and your wife and children and father and mother, brother and sister are still in good health, which I learned with gladness. Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens, I understand from your letter that you very much complain about my brevity in letter writing and I can assure you truthfully that this very much astonishes me because this is the first letter which I received from you since the one which was brought to me by Jan Eltynge; this letter came here from Zwolle the sixth of April 1684 and I was in Zwolle myself in the year 1680 and gave there a letter to the widow of Tonies Hilbrans and she said that all her letters had reached Amsterdam already and that she would deliver these as well; later on I sent other letters to her and in the year 1682 I sent another letter by a man who came to our house one night and told that he was going to travel to New Netherland and requested that I write a recommendation to you. I am therefore highly astonished that it could be possible that those letters did not arrive.

Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens I was glad to learn about your health and the health of your whole family, and that you promised that next year you will write a big letter about all the opportunities of the country, if your health so allows; and if my health allows I will send you one too. Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens I have to tell you something about what happens in the country of Drijente [Drenthe]. At present we still live in peace, as long as it will please God, but we have great fear of a war with France at present, but the great God can provide if it will please Him so and we are worthy of it. But well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens we had two very bad grain years in the years 1682 and 1683 so that an ordinary farmer cannot help himself with his own grain which gives a great deal of anxiety among the people. Yet we should not complain, we can drive away those punishments; if the Lord allows us to live in peace we can almost forget the punishment.

But the great God still provided that the rye is cheap, one can buy good rye from Meppelt [Meppel] or from Stynwijck [Steenwijk], one guilder per bushel, and so all other merchandise is reasonably priced. Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens, there are still four of us brothers left and we are reasonably prosperous and I, Hilbert Coert built a new house in the riegijen (literally a row of houses) where I now live and which is good and I have there so much business that I can keep three horses and eight cows so I am doing all right and my brother Jan now lives at Voorheys in the old place and he is reasonably prosperous as well, and my







brother Wessel is married, at Veeninge, and he is making out all right as well, and my brother Albert is a carpenter and lives in the Hoe[geveense] Echtens marsh and he is doing all right as well.

Further, well beloved cousin Coert Stevens I must tell you of your dear sister Mergin Stevens (10); they moved away from Spyre [Spier] and now live at Dwyengelo [Dwingelo] and they are in charge of the farm of the brother-in-law [of] Jan van Echten in the west-end Dwyengelo and they rented out their farm at Spyre because it was somewhat small for them and they are doing rather well there.

And I must tell you too about our other relations and also those of our uncles and aunts who are still alive. First of all, my uncle Hendreick "op den Twijel" [Tweeloo] is still alive, but his wife died and he has still five children alive and he fares reasonably well; secondly aunt Mergin is still alive "op die Hoght" and uncle Jan Mewus is dead; and aunt Mergin lives with her son-in-law and daughter and they are doing very well; and my aunt Geortin (2) is still healthy, with her husband and children, and she lives on the "Oshaer" (3) near Echten and she is doing very well. And my uncle Luijtgen Alberts is married, [living] at Hackesvolt [Haakswold], and he has one child by his wife, and he, too, is doing quite well; and one daughter of my uncle Jan Alberts is still alive and is married [living] at Hesselijnge [Hesselinge] on the place which my deceased uncle Jan had bought and she too is doing well; my uncle Hilbert Alberts left two sons and a daughter who are doing fine and my uncle Wessel Alberts left a wife and daughter, and she still lives at Amsterdam on Beckerseylandt [Bickers Island] behind the sluice, number 16, and she too is doing well; further, concerning our other relations, at Myddelhijs [Middel Hees] they are doing reasonably well too, but the oldest son is married and lives with his wife with them and they can not get along with the young woman and the son is remaining in the house and the old folks are going to come in May 1681 to Ruyn [Ruinen] to live with their youngest son who lives on his farm; further, his sister Henderixken is married and [living] in DeWyck and she too is doing well; and the youngest brother Jan Coerts married a daughter of Jan Henderickes from "Ehorst" (4) and lives at Ruijne and is a dyer of "the blue guild" and he is doing very well too; and the oldest sister Luetger died and her daughter lives in the "an hout" and she is doing fine as well; and the other sister Gesyn lives in Den Bos [Bois-le-luc] and she is doing fine as well; further of Jan Wessels his daughter Hyellygen is still alive but her husband is dead and she and her children are doing fine. The youngest daughter is married "op het wout" and now lives in Hackeswolt and is among the richest people on the "Wold"; further, at Oldenhave Luijtgen, the weaver, is dead as is his wife, and his son Geert is married [and living] on the place and his oldest son Frens is married to Cerstryue Baron and he is in charge of the farm; and the youngest son Henderyck is married to a daughter of Remmelt [who lives in] Cloester and they live together on the "Haer" (5) and are doing very well; and the one daughter Lumme married Jan Goessens and Jan Goes-





sens is dead and the other daughters live in the home of their brother Geert; further at Ansen Jan Luijtgens and niece Hender-eckin are still in good health and they have their oldest son Coert Jans living with them and they are also doing well and he has still another son living with them; and a niece Rijeke is dead and his son Vrens and daughter Altyen are both married [and living] in Ansen and both are doing fine.

Now my well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens, I don't know very much else to write except that all things remain much the same as when you lived here; as to laws and statutes, I see no changes in them, but it is so bad here in this country that I don't believe that there are here such old people who ever experienced a time like this, and if we can only live in peace then everything will work out for the best; but people here are afraid of a war with the French and when this happens woe to our country, for nobody nowadays has enough money as they had before, but we trust that it will please the great God to protect us. Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens please do not delay the writing of letters although you may not receive letters; this is not my fault. I don't let a year pass without writing a letter and you wrote that every year you mailed your letters very carefully, and yet I declare that this is the first letter which I received since that Jan Ulynghe visited us, and, my well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens, I wish you and your dear family and especially your old father and mother, and not excepting anybody, a hundred thousand good nights and trust that we will hear the very same from you and we await here a letter from you at your very first possible opportunity.

Dearly-beloved cousin Coert Stevens I would have liked to read still another of your letters in which you wrote how your wealth had increased in that country in the time you have lived there, how big your family already is, because I have previously understood that it is still a good country. Be so kind as to inform us at every opportunity how much it is there and I promise you to write again at the first opportunity how we have made out, whether we still live in peace or not.

This letter was written in a hurry because there was on opportunity to send the letter to Zwolle; if it so happens that I have more time to write then I will write you about everything. If you write tell us about all those who are from this region, whether they are still alive or not and how they are doing; and I pray that you wish all our good relations and friends a hundred thousand good nights; herewith I trust you and your whole family to the care of the great God who lives forever, Amen.

This letter was written on April 13th, 1684, and I hope that it will reach you with the help of this great God; herewith I remain, your respectful servant and cousin. Actum Voor Hijes in the Province of Drenthe. In the Manor of Ruinen.

Notes: (1) Marchien Stevens. (2) Geerte. (3) The "Oshaer" was a farm near Echten. (4) The "Ehorst" seems to have been a farm. (5) The "Haer" may be another farm, probably an abbreviation of the "Oshaer".



Done at Hoogeveen, October 26th, 1686

Respected and well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens of Voorhies,

I Albert Coerts of Voorhies and my wife Aeltyn Coops Ad-demeraels of Echten wish a hundred thousand good nights to you and your family and all your relatives; now further, I want to acknowledge the content of your letter of November 10th, 1684, and learned from this letter of the death of great-uncle Steven; I wish for him the eternal joy and for you and us as well if it please the Lord. You are my kin and I will keep the friendship with my dear relatives and I will continue to write to my dear cousin Coert Stevens as long as it pleases the great God to spare me.

Further, I must tell my dear cousin about my life and business; and I further inform my cousin that I have married the oldest daughter of the sheriff Coplyuytys [Coop Luityens] of Echten, now deceased, who was sheriff of Echten when the relatives left, and I still live at Hoogeveene and I built there a new house and I sell lumber and nails and do some carpentry work and I have a peat-marsh too and I also have peat dug; further, I must inform my cousin that I have two daughters by my wife and the oldest was born in 1683, the 16th of December, Friday night between two and three o'clock and her name is Swaentyn, and the youngest was born in the year 1685, Thursday before Easter and her name is Jaeckoby Elysebet and she was baptized [i.e. named] after one of my wife's relatives, and my wife and children are fairly well.

Now I must tell you how large Hoogeveen is in number of houses because there are already approximately 300 houses and this increases year after year.

And now must I tell you about my three brothers: my brother Hilbert, the oldest, and he is doing quite well, God be praised; and my brother Jan, the second, is doing quite well too and he and his wife and children are in good health; and my brother Wessel, the third, is doing well too and he and his wife and children are in good health too and he lives in Veninge near Suijtwolde [Zuidwolde].

Further, I must inform you that your sister Marrichgyn Stewens (1) is still in good health as are her husband and children and they are doing reasonably well, and they live at Dwingeloo. Further, I must tell you that cousin Hilbert of Mydelhies died in the year 1685, in the month of July, and he died at Ruinen, for you must understand that he lived in Ruinen; he and his youngest son and his wife could not get along too well with the wife of his oldest son, therefore the old folks had moved from Hies to live in Ruinen with them [the youngest son and his wife].

Further, I desire to request my dear cousin do me the favor to write to me so that I may know whether or not my letter arrived, and when you do write, address your letter to Albert Coers van Voorhies, lumber merchant on the Hooge Echtsens peat-marsh. Now I don't know much more to write for this trip, so I wish you all the blessings and the Kingdom of God. Amen.

Your respectful youngest cousin and true friend

Albert Coerts van Voorhies.





Note: (1) Marrichgyn Stewens is also written Mergin Stevens and Marchien Stevens.

Praise the Lord forever. — February 9th, 1687

Respected cousin Coert Stevens van Voorhyes,

I Hilbert Coerts at Voorhyes write once more this letter so that you can see that we still have a desire to know about your wellbeing. Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens I inform you that I received a letter from you which you sent through Jelyes Prefest and learned from it about the health and welfare of yourself and your entire family and also that your son is married although scarcely twenty years old. I learned also that your son bought from our cousins, namely Jan Cijers and cousin Henderickin, their farm and he will pay for it yearly seven hundred guilders and he also maintains the house for them and further he will feed three cows free. I am astonished how Jan Cijers has gained so much in this period since he was kind of a prodigal spender. We are very much surprised and it cannot but be a very good country over there.

Well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens, if at this time a man went to that country with his whole family and were to bring with him approximately two thousand guilders would such a man have an opportunity to get ahead, and assuming, well-beloved cousin, that in Drenthe still lived your father or brother, would you be willing to advise them to settle where you are? I request from you, when you have time and opportunity, be so good as to write us all the details about the land, as I shall now do.

Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens I inform you that we are all together in good health and my brother Jan Coerts also and my brother Albert Coerts likewise, and all of us are doing reasonably well. Concerning our uncles: my uncle Henderck Alberts is still living at Tweel [Tweeloo] and is doing very well, and my uncle Luytgen Alberts lives in Hackeswolt and he is also still doing well, and aunt Merigien at Hught is also still doing well and aunt Geertien at the "Oshaer" is still doing well, she and her whole family. These are the ones left of our father's family.

Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens, your dear sister requested me to tell you all about her which I shall do to the best of my ability. She lives presently in Dwengelo [Dwingeloo] and [he] is the manager of the estate of squire van Oldengaren and they are doing well and they will move in May to the market square to the sheriff's house and then he will be manager for the sheriff.

Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens you had asked in your letter to be informed about Jan Cyer's house in Stynwyck [Steenwijk]; the house was sold, as Henderck Boujans has told me himself and he said to me that he himself was going to write Jan Coersen how everything stood and that the sale had incurred so many expenses so that according to his calculations Jan Cyers would still be able to receive three hundred French guilders and he told me that he would send the invoice for the expenses incur-





red, and that Jan Cyers should send him an order as to where he should put the money.

Further, well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens, Henderck Vocken of Ruinen herewith requests that you will have the goodness to inform him about the well-being of the heirs of Vocke Jans of Ruinen; and Henderck Vocken is a half-brother of Vocke Jans and he complains that he has not yet received a letter neither from his brother's wife or children, and he is anxious to receive a letter from them and to know who is still alive and how they are doing.

Further, well beloved, I must tell you something about how things are in our country and what has happened during this winter. A terrible catastrophe or a severe punishment has come upon Groningerlandt [Groningen] and Emderland [Emden] and Ostvreeslandt [East Friesland] because of a northwest wind which about ten o'clock put Groningerlandt completely under water by which great damage occurred; two ships with people are gone and also entire villages with people and cattle so that not many have their lives, and the water has stood in the streets of the city of Groningen, and it is said that the country is in a terrible state at present, and, there having been at least four thousand people drowned, and such beautiful cattle which is to be lamented; but what is it? God the Lord has punished the land, not unjustly. O, man is to blame; his sins are too great.

Concerning the situation in our native country, called the country of Drent, it is here a moneyless time but that is the most we can complain about, for everything is normal as it was when you lived here; we have nowadays cheap rye, fifteen or sixteen stuivers per skepel [term of dry measure], one eighth butter has stood all summer at about seven guilders per eighth (1) and other merchandise accordingly.

My well-beloved cousin must favor us if he will write us again by way of Amsterdam and not by way of Swol [Zwolle]. We cannot get a letter from Swol without its costing us eleven or twelve stuivers to Hilbrant van Dijkehuysen [Dyckuysen] over there; and when he informs us through the mail that the letters are at his house that costs us four stuivers; and then if we want them we are still obliged to travel to Swol and fetch the letters.

Further, well-beloved cousin I want to show you a different route; be so good as to direct the letters to Amsterdam, Byeckerseeeylandt [Bickers Island] behind the sluice next to number 16, the house with the door where the yellow clapper hangs, to the widow of Wessel Alberts, carpenter of Voorhyes, then we will surely receive them.

Now cousin I do not know much more to write except to wish you and your whole family the best, especially for your souls and also for your bodies and I wish you peace on earth and eternally hereafter, amen.

According to your letter you are still waiting for a letter; how this comes about I do not know because I sent them all by way of Swol. I don't know what is wrong unless it happened that the letter failed to arrive but because of this don't fail to write and also to have it delivered in Amsterdam, at Byeckerseeeylandt behind



the sluice, next to number 16, the door with the yellow clapper, to the widow of Wessel Alberts, carpenter of Voorhyes.

Well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens, when you write again be so kind as to let us know about your sisters and brothers over there, how big your family is already, and I will let you know the size of our troop: I have two children out of my first marriage and four from my last wife; and our Jan has [for a wife] a daughter of Jan Vreeces of Nuijl [Nuy] by whom he has four children; and our Wessel is married and living in Veeninghe and he has five children by his wife; and our Albert in Hooghevene has two children by his wife.

Herewith be commended forever to the great God and when the opportunity presents itself be so kind and write to us again.

Your respectful cousin

Hilbert Coerts.

Note: (1) one eighth of a barrel. Herewith is meant a small barrel of butter containing about twenty-five or thirty pounds (Dutch pounds of 500 grams).

1699. Bless the Lord always, and forget not all his benefits. Respected well-beloved cousin Coert Stevens of Voorhyes,

I received from the hands of Pyeter Byernies the letter which you wrote on August 30th, 1698, and understand from it that all of you are still healthy, also prosperous and living in a good state of peace, and that you also have a good government which I have read about with pleasure, and I inform you that all of us are still in the same condition for which all of us are obliged to thank God.

Further, we send all of you, no one excluded, our heartfelt greetings and [you] say for us to all our good relatives many good nights from all of us.

Further, my cousin writes about the money which I have forwarded to Amsterdam; this amounted to two hundred and ninety-two guilders and eighteen stuivers from which your dear sister Mergin Stevens received [her share] as you have written to her. But my cousin Coert Stevens must know that during the time the money has been in Amsterdam the new shillings have been set at five and one half stuivers; how much that amounts to I do not know. I don't know how much it was before and they must send you the balance and I do not doubt that this also will happen; And I kept the account with Hendericke Boujans, as you have written, i.e. that he should make it according to his conscience, which he has done; and from him I received these two hundred and ninety-two guilders and eighteen stuivers and no more; and I went with Peter Bernien to your sister who told me that she received of this amount two hundred and thirty-eight guilders; the balance must still be settled, but the loss from the new shilling must still be deducted from this, and you must make allowance for this.

Dear cousin, you write that you are doing very well, that you can pay your debts and that you then still can save. This makes me very happy, but I must say that here in your native country in these times not so much gain can be made.

You must know that Henderick Friens from behind the Con-





vent bought your movable goods, but no progress was made with the furniture. The situation is thus: the old people have died on the place and the oldest son has now sublet the farm and he cannot do any more farming which is also not without reason, this happens more and more often. The land is valued too much, one must presently give at the very least ground rent in six or seven payments; and the head tax is doubled as well. Wherever one used to pay four stuivers, one now must pay eight stuivers. The same is true for rent on farms, which is doubled as well, and one must pay one guilder per year for each horse, and for one bee hive two stuivers every half year. Thus the country is heavily burdened even though there is peace, however for the time being there is still no hope for relief, for the reason that the country has fallen behind to such an extent in this war that it is so much concerned with interest to be paid that the available capital does not suffice.

But the Lord can turn it for the better with good result, amen.

Beloved cousin Coert Stevens of Voorhyes, I must inform you who of us are still alive; there were seven of us, but now there are no more than my brother Jan Coerts and I. As to my father's brothers and sisters, only Aunt Gertie of the "Ossehaer" and uncle Luchgen in Haakswolt are alive. Concerning my children: I have by my first wife one son and a daughter, and by my second wife five sons, the oldest of the five is about twenty years and the youngest is about eight years.

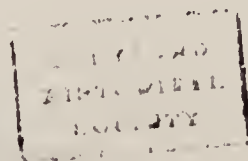
My cousin writes that he is about sixty years old, that his hair is white and that his strength is decreasing; and I, Hilbert Coerts, am in my fifty-fifth year and, thanks be to God, I am still reasonably healthy and strong.

Concerning groceries, these are very expensive these days, the rye is about three guilders per skepel and other grain sells accordingly, and all the foodstuffs are expensive so that there is much anxiety among many people, but it behooves us to think no other than that these are our deserved calamities. Our time will be soon running out; as long as I can I will write and I hope that you will not fail to do the same.

Herewith I am ending and commending you all to God's salvation and blessings, for time and eternity, you and your whole family, and [I] remain eternally your respectful cousin and servant, amen.

Hilbert Coerts in het riegiën.

1699, the 10th of March.







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